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## Young People – Religion – the Church in the Sociological Perspective. Continuations

**Abstract:** The inspiration to pursue a research topic or to contribute to the research of other scientists often comes from a single remark, thought or sentence. ‘Continuations’ in the heading suggests that this, too, is the case of this paper. It presents early results of a research project undertaken in 2017 to examine the religiousness of high school and academic youth inhabiting different social environments and coming from different regions of Poland (the Silesian, St Cross and Lesser Poland voivodeships). Research of this kind is undertaken relatively often, and usually focuses on similar topics; was it thus necessary to add yet another new project? The inspiration behind it comes from the findings of Fr. Janusz Mariański, an expert on the religiousness of Poles, which he described in numerous publications and in particular in the latest one: Religious activity of Poles in regression, a paper which forms part of the Anniversary Publication of Prof. Andrzej Wójtowicz. In the paper, J. Mariański summarises the results of multiannual sociological research of the topic. His central thesis points to a slow but consistent diminishing – regression – of Poles’ religious activity in the past decade. Whilst it is still possible to talk about a specific uniqueness of Polish religiosity, it does not mean that it will remain so unique in the future.

**Keywords:** religiousness, youth, secularization, polish, Catholic Church

It is often the case that the inspiration to pursue research or contribute to the research of other scholars comes from a single remark, thought or even a spoken or written sentence. The title of this article – continuations – suggests the occurrence of such a situation. This paper contains the first, introductory report from the research conducted in the last few months on the issue of a broad understanding of religiousness among secondary school and university students as well as young people working and living in various social environments in

the Silesian Voivodeship. Such studies are undertaken relatively often<sup>1</sup>, therefore one can doubt the necessity to carry out yet another project. This is when the very inspiration appears, turning the attention of the researcher to the threads pursued many times. Namely, these are the remarks of an insightful researcher and expert in all aspects of religiousness of the people in Poland – Janusz Mariański, included in numerous publications, especially in the latest one. In the *Jubilee Book* dedicated to Professor Andrzej Wójtowicz, J. Mariański includes the text *Religious Practices of the Polish People in Decline (Praktyki religijne Polaków w regresie)*, which is to some extent a summary of the results of the sociological perspective on this issue. The main thesis of the author indicates a gradual, but systematic decline – regression – of the religious practices among the Polish people in the last decade<sup>2</sup>. Although it is still possible to speak of the characteristic uniqueness of the Polish religiousness, it does not mean that it will remain this way in the future. According to the author, there is a transition from the Church of the people to the Church of choice. It seems that a certain type of traditional religiousness ceases to be attractive to a part of the young generation of the Polish people, which either inclines to religious indifference or seeks “their own forms of expression for their own transcendental longings and quests”. Therefore, the polarization of attitudes and behaviours towards religion might be predicted in youth environments and in distant future in the whole society<sup>3</sup>. J. Mariański adds that generational differences in religious practices between young people and adults are shaping gradually, while in the future they will become more noticeable, similarly in the modernized Western societies. The reasons for this are various – from the lack of active pastoral activity, personal neglect, studies and reading matter, emphasizing the values of “this world” to competitive ways of spending free time<sup>4</sup>. According to this sociologist, the conflict of values appears more and more often in the lives of Polish families. Even if family – as he notices – still remains an important authority handing down values and norms, also

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<sup>1</sup> C.f. J. Mariański, *Kościół a religijność młodzieży*, in: *Od Kościoła ludu do Kościoła wyboru religia a przemiany społeczne w Polsce*, I. Borowik, W. Zdaniewicz (ed.), Krakow 1996; S. H. Zaręba, *Dynamika świadomości religijno-moralnej młodzieży w warunkach przemian ustrojowych w Polsce (1988-1998)*, GUS, Warszawa 2003; Idem, *W kierunku jakiej religijności? Studia nad katolicyzmem polskiej młodzieży*, GUS, Warszawa 2008; *Młodzież Warszawy – pokolenie pontyfikatu Jana Pawła II*, a joint publication edited by W. Zdaniewicz and S. H. Zaręba, Warszawa 2005; *Socjologia religii: Religijna i moralna kondycja młodzieży polskiej – mity i rzeczywistość*, J. Baniak (ed.), Poznań 2005; W. Wesoly, *Formacja i świadomość misyjna katechizowanej młodzieży. Studium socjologiczno-pastoralne*, Olsztyn 2005; J. Baniak, *Między buntem i sprzeciwem a potrzebą akceptacji i zrozumienia. Kryzys tożsamości osobowej a świadomość religijna i moralna młodzieży gimnazjalnej. Studium socjologiczne*, Wyd. Homini S. C. Kraków 2008.

<sup>2</sup> J. Mariański, *Praktyki religijne Polaków w regresie*, in: *Kościół – religie – kultury. Współczesne wymiary reprezentacji i partycypacji*, ed. M. Sroczyńska, S. H. Zaręba (red.), Wyd. UKSW, Warszawa 2017, s. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 64.

concerning worldview, at the same time the “attitudes of axiological discord between parents and children” are on the increase<sup>5</sup>. Janusz Mariański accurately points out that these phenomena are connected with the transformational processes occurring in Poland in the 1990s. The history of many societies shows that in the periods when families struggle with adaptation to entirely distinct conditions and ways of life than before, there is a decline in keeping intergenerational traditions alive. Such assessment shows that the religiousness of the Polish people and especially of the young generation, is on the road to continually accelerating transformations, that is why according to J. Mariański, sociological examination of religious practices needs to be continued<sup>6</sup>.

The further part of this article includes partial results of the research conducted on a sample of 300 persons representing the young generation of the Polish people – from 16 to 25 years old (secondary school students, university students, working young people) and this characteristic of the respondents was the main criterium of selecting the purposive sample. In view of such size and the fact that the research was conducted in various parts of the Silesian Voivodeship, it is not a representative sample. Samples chosen in such partial studies will never be representative, that is why it should be taken into consideration that research based on them will always be narrow in scope – which is significant, desired, e.g. for diagnostic or verification reasons and complementing the general picture of the studied phenomena and processes. Therefore, it is advisable to relate their results to the wider scope of the research – that is to the studies based on representative samples, nationwide studies carried out by public opinion research centres (e.g. CBOS or TNS OBOP) with the awareness of all concerns they might cause or in the case of religious phenomena. Due to the aforementioned reasons, the presented research needs to be regarded not as a survey, but based on the method of individual cases<sup>7</sup>.

The statistical data illustrating the religiousness among the Polish people, their attitude towards religion, faith and the Church are changing year by year to a larger or smaller degree and are subject to the influence of current social and political events, which especially concerns attitudes towards the Church. Often the aspects of these phenomena might be grasped only through partial, narrow research. In 2015 the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) published the results of a survey entitled: *The changes in the basic indicators of religiousness among the Polish people after the death of Pope John Paul II (Zmiany w zakresie podstawowych wskaźników religijności Polaków po śmierci Jana Pawła II)*. The research includes the decade 2005-2015 and shows the tendencies and directions of the described changes. Their general direction is

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<sup>5</sup> J. Mariański, *Miedzy sekularyzacją i ewangelizacją*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 2003, p. 450.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *inter alia* T. Pilch, T. Braun, *Zasady badań pedagogicznych*, Wyd. akademickie Żak, Warszawa 2010; A. Wojnarska, *Studium indywidualnych przypadków jako metoda diagnostyczno-terapeutyczna*, in: *Zeszyty Wszechnicy Świętokrzyskiej*, M. Adamczyk, St. Popka (ed.), Wszechnica Świętokrzyska, Kielce 2000.

not surprising for the researchers of similar phenomena – there is a turn towards more individualized and at the same time less institutionalized religiousness, which is represented in monthly studies on the subject (on a sample of about one thousand persons each time). In the presented diagnosis *inter alia* different age groups of the respondents were taken into consideration, including the youngest from 18- to 25-year-olds. Among them the percentage of the deeply devout has remained almost the same, whereas the number of those who define themselves as non-believers has increased twofold (in 2005 – 6%, in 2014 – 15%), and the number of those who regard themselves as believers has dropped (from 86% in 2005 to 77% in 2014). There are also changes with regard to religious practices: 44% of the youngest respondents declared a weekly attendance at Masses, church services or religious meetings in 2014, whereas in 2005 this number was 51%. The percentage of those who do not take part in religious practices whatsoever has increased (in 2005 – 10%, in 2014 – 18%). Apart from that, the number of believers who attend Church regularly has decreased (from 51% to 43%), while the level of practicing believers who attend Church less frequently than once a week has remained the same (38% in 2005, 34% in 2014). Practicing non-believers are on the increase (from 2% to 5%), which certainly deserves to be better known and reflected on, while the number of non-practicing non-believers has grown (from 4% to 11%)<sup>8</sup>.

Reliable data concerning the conditions and quality of the lives of the Polish people is contained within the annual Social Diagnosis coordinated by J. Czapiński. It also includes the results of research (nationwide representative sampling) of the basic indicators of religiousness among the Polish people. The diagnosis from 2015 contains interesting findings, first and foremost the one that since 2005 adult Polish people have less and less frequently attended Church, but they have prayed to God more and more often in difficult life situations. These indicators confirm the thesis that the process of deinstitutionalization of faith and individualization of religious behaviours is progressing. Since 2007 the former phenomenon has been accompanied by the decrease in the frequency of the latter – individual prayer – and this tendency has been deepening in subsequent surveys, and so in 2015 it was the lowest since 1995. At the same time another interesting phenomenon can be observed: in 2015 more persons than before (in 2013) declared a systematic participation in church services and other religious ceremonies – at the same level as in 2011. However, the authors of the study concluded that in the context of the entire results from 2015 concerning the described phenomenon, it would be difficult to find reasons for slowing down the process of secularization in Polish society or even the beginnings of religious revival<sup>9</sup>. The lowest behavioural indicators of religiousness are

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K\\_026\\_15.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K_026_15.PDF)

<sup>9</sup> *Diagnoza społeczna 2015. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków*, J. Czapiński, T. Panek (ed.), The Social Monitoring Council, November 2015, Warsaw, pp. 282-283, [www.diagnoza\\_raport\\_2015.pdf](http://www.diagnoza_raport_2015.pdf) [30. 07. 2015].

characteristic of males from 25 to 34 years old, the inhabitants of the largest cities, persons who are best educated and the wealthiest. In comparison with 2013, there has been an increase in the number of persons not participating in religious practices and ceremonies among the young – from 16 to 24 years of age. Taking into account also persons a bit older (25- to 34-year-olds), we get a comparison concerning the percentage of monthly attendance at church services:

Age	0 times		1-3 times		4 times		more than 4 times		average per month	
	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015
16-24	36.3	38.3	28.3	26.0	24.3	26.3	11.1	9.3	2.31	2.22
25-34	41.1	41.9	29.6	28.7	22.2	24.2	7.1	5.3	1.96	1.84

Source: *Social Diagnosis 2015. The Conditions and Quality of Life in Poland (Diagnoza społeczna 2015. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków)*, J. Czapiński, T. Panek (ed.), The Social Monitoring Council (Rada Monitoringu Społecznego), November 2015, Warsaw, pp. 282-283, [www.diagnoza\\_raport\\_2015.pdf](http://www.diagnoza_raport_2015.pdf) [30. 07. 2015].

The research conducted by the author of this study included a few aspects of religiousness and Church matters connected with young people, starting from their declaration of religious faith and its conditionings (the influence of family and a wider social environment), through religious practices and their frequency, ending with the institutional and community religiousness, that is the attitude towards the clergy, the Church as a social organization. Also its main functions, the presence of the Church in public life and opinion on the subject, and first of all, concerning the relationship between the Church and politics. This institutional and community aspect of the research will be described below. The scope of the description will also be a wider context of the issue, on the basis of Janusz Mariański's works, and first of all, from the book discussing strictly the Catholic Church in public life, that is manifesting itself in specific social and cultural forms and shapes available to the sociological analyses<sup>10</sup>.

The observation offered by J. Mariański in the publication in question is not surprising. According to it, in the conditions of democracy and socio-cultural pluralism, the Catholic Church in Poland is searching for its place and role in society, which is accompanied by the lack of the ability to explore the religious potential of young people. They do not reject faith and religion completely, but they are losing the attachment to the Church. "There has been a slow move away of young people from the Catholic Church"<sup>11</sup>. A broader characteristics of this phenomenon was presented, after an in-depth analysis of the concept and attitudes of various representatives of sciences, by another sociologist – Józef Baniak. He claims that "Under the influence of rebellion, resistance and opposition to the Church, its religious

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Mariański, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce w przestrzeni życia publicznego. Studium socjologiczne*, Wyd. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2013, p. 6, 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 20-22.

doctrine, moral imperatives and prohibitions, interfering in the secular policy of the State and local communities, moral hypocrisy of a part of the parish clergy, sexual scandals caused by priests and monks, a significant percentage of young people in Poland turn away from the Church structures, break ties with them, emigrate (...) from the Church and escape its influence and religious care, while trying to regulate its religious needs on their own. There are also such young people who sever all their connections with religion and the Catholic faith, at the same time declaring acceptance of humanist ethics and secular culture or atheist spirituality, trying to use it to reach their own expectations and life plans. They do not take into consideration the religion propagated by the Roman Catholic Church to fulfil their immediate and long-term life needs, which is the result of the former critical attitude towards it<sup>12</sup>. This characteristics, organizing the views on the relationship of young people today with religion, would have to be regarded as a synthetic study of religious identity among young people which becomes part of its generational identity<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> J. Baniak, *Religia katolicka i Kościół rzymskokatolicki w opiniach polskiej młodzieży. Od akceptacji do kontestacji*, NOMOS, Krakow 2015, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Not delving into detailed discussions on how to define the notion "young people", the author adopts a sociological and anthropological perspective, according to which young people are a social group situated between childhood and adulthood – the boundaries here might be set by puberty and starting a family as well as commencing work. It should be agreed upon that the boundaries are blurred, since in our times we can call young people the group which start a family or enter a civil partnership bringing up children before launching a career (university students). The young generation is defined by the possibility to experience the same historic, social, cultural and sometimes even political events, as well as communing with the same cultural circle. (C.f. H.M. Griese, *Socjologiczne teorie młodzieży*, wyd. Impuls, Krakow 1996). According to the psychoanalytical approach, the transition period between childhood and adulthood is connected with searching for your own identity, often anxiety or disorientation, susceptibility to ideology and indoctrination (c.f. E.H. Erikson, *Dzieciństwo i społeczeństwo*, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, Poznań 1997). The researchers emphasize that the dominating trait of this social group is rebelliousness against the world of grown-ups, based on a simple negation, opposition towards the proposition of adults, as well as towards everything that seems to be a certain threat. It is difficult not to agree with the statement that the young generation is characterized by a multicultural changeability, not organized by any criterion, connected with following constantly new idols and ideologies, depending on what functions at present in the cultural market (c.f. E. Wysocka, *Doświadczenie życia w młodości – problemy, kryzysy i strategie ich rozwiązywania. Próba opisu strukturalno-funkcjonalnego modelu życia preferowanego przez młodzież z perspektywy pedagogiki społecznej*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2010). With regard to the generation born at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (after 1995), the following notions are in use: global children, adolescents socializing on the Internet, unable to live outside the net, digital natives, for whom the media (the Internet, the mobile phone, the Pad and the iPad are tools for fun, entertainment, education and work; the most technology-oriented generation in history, approaching life realistically, materialistically; open and accepting diversity, they want to know everything on cue, online; for them it is crucial to reach information quickly; they enjoy studying, gain various competence, highly valued at the labour market, they define themselves as creative and innovative, self-confident and knowing their worth – this is Generation Z (A. Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, B. Chomątowska, *Pokolenie Z na rynku pracy – wyzwania dla zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi*, "Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu/ Research Papers of Wrocław University of Economics", 2014, no. 350/; B. Senderowicz, *Między pokoleniami*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 7.12.2011; J. Morbitzer, *O istocie medialności młodego*

The analysis of chosen aspects of the author's own research is based on 132 surveys (from among 300), which contained the broadest justification of the respondents' answers to the chosen questions. It is an important criterium due to the qualitative approach to the obtained data. Although the studies were conducted with the use of a survey form, its questionnaire contained a few open and half open questions (with sets of answers), which make it possible to get to know the quality of views of the respondents. Among such a preferable group of the respondents there were 59% of women (78) as well as 41% of men (54), students of secondary schools constituted 21.9% (29) of the respondents, 50.7% (67) were university students as well as 27.2% (36) – working youth. Declarations concerning the faith of this group of respondents are as follows: deeply devout – 21.2% (28), believers – 58.3% (77 persons), weak believers – 11.4% (15) as well as non-believers – 9.1% (12 respondents).

The surveyed adolescents were not asked if in their opinion the contact between young people and the Church is declining, or their religiousness in the form of churchgoing, since this aspect of the respondents' life was not the subject of research, which was focused on the idea of why it is the case.

Young respondents indicate a few reasons for this phenomenon, first of all, they speak of the fact that the Church does not adapt to the changing social, cultural and political reality in Poland and in the world, which results in the lack of an interesting offer for adolescents (15.9% of the responses).

The following examples justify this viewpoint: *Because the Church is not alive, it is static* (a male student, 24 years old, an inhabitant of Silesia, a believer).

*Because in my opinion, the Church is too conservative and unreal when it comes to everyday life. It does not keep up with the present time, that is why young people do not think that the Church might help with anything* (a female student, 21 years old, Cieszyn Silesia, a believer). *The Church does not develop to encourage young people. There are little interesting priests and catechists* (a male, 23 years old, an inhabitant of Silesia, a believer).

According to the respondents, an important reason is also the lack of proper religious upbringing in the family, handing down to young people appropriate patterns of behaviour or role models resulting from the social and cultural role of the Catholic Church (13.6% of the responses): *The reason is the indifference of young people to God. Poor upbringing by their parents* (a male, 24 years old, a student from Silesia, deeply devout). A similar opinion is shared by a female (26 years old), a student from the Silesian Voivodeship, deeply devout: *There is a lack of examples on the part of the parents. Atheism and greed for money are fashionable.*

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*pokolenia*, „NEODIDAGMATA”, 33/34, Poznan 2011/2012). C.f. also: M. Kozakiewicz, *Młodzież – teorie młodzieży*, in: *Encyklopedia Psychologii*, W. Szewczuk (ed.), Fundacja Innowacja, Warszawa 1998; K. Koseła, *Młodzież*, in: *Encyklopedia Socjologii*, A. Kojder (ed.), Wyd. Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 1999; Z. Melosik, *Kultura popularna i tożsamość młodzieży. W niewoli władzy i wolności*, Krakow 2013; K. Szafraniec, *Polska młodzież: między apatią, partycypacją a buntem*, in: *Jedna Polska? Dawne i nowe zróżnicowania społeczne*, A. Kojder (ed.), WAM, Komitet Socjologii PAN, Krakow 2007.

Another factor is that adolescents encounter on their path of life many patterns of existence competitive with religious institutions (9.1% of the responses): *The young prefer to surf the Internet etc.* (a female student from Silesia, 24 years old, a believer).

*There are many interesting activities for young people. On Sunday you can go to the cinema or to the shops instead of going to Church* (a female student from Silesia, 22 years old, a believer).

Young respondents also indicate the noticeable phenomenon of trivializing the spiritual needs of the young generation (8.3% of persons claim that): *The reason is high-intensity hedonism. A lack of moral values handed down by their parents* (a female student, 25 years old, Silesian, a believer).

*Young people are either too young to devote plenty of time to religion or they just do not attach significance to it in their life* (a 20-year-old female student, Cieszyn, a non-believer).

Another category of reasons why young people depart from the Church concerns phenomena and processes, which would be defined as macrosocial in sociology: these are socio-political changes in the country and around the world, the democratization of life as well as consumerism, the spreading ideology of individualism, modernization, a deterioration in social bonds (8.3% of the responses).

A 20-year-old male student from Cieszyn, a believer, explains it thus: *The Church might be tedious for young people. I think that the society's approach to the teachings of the Church also influences that and the fact that the world is changing very fast.*

A number of respondents (8) indicate the influence of the media, which promote "secularizational" patterns. A 27-year-old inhabitant of Katowice, who is a deeply devout male student, sums up this issue briefly: *There is a witch-hunt against the Church in the media. Apart from that, the contemporary world provides better solutions.*

The reason is also *a growing orthorexia shown by the media, and what's more (...) the Church is losing touch with reality* (a female student, 24 years of age, an inhabitant of Silesia).

A small group of respondents indicate such factors as improved education among young people (rationalization of thinking), technocratization of life (3.8% of the respondents). *Adolescents are more interested in technological development, instead of wondering about serious life problems discussed in the Church* (a female student from Silesia, 25 years old, deeply devout).

A few young people claim that the Church itself, through its activity, contributes to the change in the religious attitudes among adolescents.

A young woman (26 years old), a student from Silesia, defining herself as a deeply devout person, says: *The Church offers too many events, and too little religiousness.*

Another woman from Silesia (24 years of age), also a deeply devout student speaks in more detail: *Young people do not regard affiliation with the Church as something necessary. They think that all religions are equal, that God is kind and they will not be condemned, there is no hell. The ecumenical activity of the Catholic Church gives them a sign that it is not important what you believe in, you can be a good person and get on well*

*and pray together. The Holy Mass is boring to them – they are right, its structure is wearisome. The Church is trying to be more and more attractive and introduces practices which take away the sacred from it, they destroy the mystery. Instead of being more appealing, it is becoming an option to choose from in your free time and it is not as interesting as other attractions (a female student, 24 years of age, Silesian, a believer).*

The aforementioned issues provoke reflection, which is the major axis of the second part of this text, concerning a specifically up-to-date, controversial and still a “hot” topic in the public discourse which divides society. Namely, the participation of the Catholic Church in politics (Weber explains it as striving for power, making decisions or participating in them as part of exercising power with the use of various means and the influence on its division, as well as the activity of state institutions). The political involvement of the Catholic Church in Poland is not a new issue, it has appeared in public opinion research continually, and first of all, in journalism, where the over-involvement of the Church in politics, or even the politicization of religion, are discussed. This assessment concerns the last two decades, since in public statements nobody deprecates the role of the Roman Catholic Church as the advocate of democratic transformations in the period of social conflict, as it is referred to by J. Baniak<sup>14</sup>, or the integration function of the Church to preserve the highest values and first of all, the freedom of a human being.

Since 2015, that is from the moment when a conservative political party (Law and Justice) seized power, declaring a close relationship with the Catholic Church and in principle including the Church into all content and form of exercising power, the topic of the participation of the Catholic Church in politics has become not only again significant, but also sensitive. Undoubtedly, the activity of the Catholic media, including Radio Maryja and TV Trwam (managed by the Redemptorist, Doctor of Philosophy in Theology, Tadeusz Rydzyk) contributes to this fact, as they openly declare their support for the current authorities, not hiding their influence on the effect of the last parliamentary and presidential elections (2015), while deprecating the former liberal and democratic authorities as well as engaging in a lively political discourse in the company of the ones in power. However, the official position of the Catholic Church in Poland clearly separates the matters of the Church from politics. On the webpages of the Polish Bishops’ Conference this thesis is confirmed. Not looking too far into the past, let us refer to the announcement issued by the PBC in September 2015, before the parliamentary elections. Appealing to vote according to one’s conscience, the clergymen stated: “The Church on the strength of its mission as well as in accordance with its essence, should not establish ties with any political party or a political, economic or social system”<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> J. Baniak, *Czynniki kryzysu tożsamości kapłańskiej wśród księży rzymskokatolickich w Polsce. Studium socjologiczne*, „Teologia Praktyczna”, vol. 8, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *The announcement of PBC before the parliamentary election*, 09.10.2015 [www.episkopat.pl](http://www.episkopat.pl) [20.09.2017].

Also the standpoint of the President of the Polish Bishops' Conference, Archbishop of Poznan, Stanisław Gądecki, explicitly confirms the aforementioned position of the PBC. Archbishop Gądecki wrote: "The Church and the State should maintain autonomy and kind-hearted cooperation. Both communities serve personal and social development of human beings"<sup>16</sup>.

According to the public opinion, it is the right attitude. The all-Poland research concerning the relationship between the Church and the State is not easily accessible, yet in some studies content on the subject might be found. Also in this case the already quoted book written by J. Mariański, entitled *The Catholic Church in Poland in the Area of Public Life. A Sociological Analysis (Kościół katolicki w Polsce w przestrzeni życia publicznego. Studium socjologiczne)* might serve as an example since the publication presents surveys conducted by CBOS and TNS OBOP from the end of the 1990s to the year 2012, as well as other authors (Roguska, Marody, Mandes, Ochocki, Cichomski, Jerzyński, Zieliński, Baniak, Rola) on the subject in question. J. Mariański sums up the detailed analysis of the quantitative results of the sociological surveys thus: "Despite a certain discrepancy in the percentages acquired in the public opinion polls, namely the views of the Polish people on the involvement of the Church in public life, the empirical data collected are to a certain degree conclusive. The overwhelming majority of the Polish people claim that the Church has a lot of power in society, that it influences the decisions of the public authorities as well as it should have much less of this power. Only a substantial minority of the surveyed Polish people is willing to grant the Church the right to become engaged in political matters, while only few demand increasing this involvement"<sup>17</sup>. The Polish people negatively assess the political involvement of clergymen and expect that the Church (the clergy) will not participate in election campaigns, that it will be politically neutral or even apolitical. Such an opinion is expressed by both adults and young people, whose viewpoint the author of the discussed fragment of the publication presents extensively<sup>18</sup>.

The research of a similar profile conducted in the last years does not indicate a change in the attitudes of the Polish people. According to a survey by Ariadna<sup>19</sup> (for the portal [ciekaweliczyby.pl](http://ciekaweliczyby.pl)) from September 2017, 63% of the Polish people claim that the Church should remain neutral towards the policy of the ruling party. For 48% of the respondents those relations with the authorities are too close, 16% assess them positively, while 22% of the surveyed have no opinion. The majority (70%) consider it inappropriate that during sermons political issues are raised – for 14%

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<sup>16</sup> Archbishop S. Gądecki's statement for the Emaus Radio, quoted on 07.12.2016 at the PBC website ([www.episkopat.pl](http://www.episkopat.pl), 20.09.2017).

<sup>17</sup> J. Mariański, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce...*, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, pp. 163-165.

<sup>19</sup> Ariadna is an all-Polish research panel audited by the Polish Association of Public Opinion and Marketing Research Firms (OFBOR), [www.panelariadna.pl](http://www.panelariadna.pl) [18.09.2017].

such subject matter is appropriate (51% assess them negatively, 9% – rather positively, 5% – decidedly positively). Among the practicing Catholics 31% criticise the demeanour of the Church – among the ones who do not attend any church such an opinion is expressed by 58% of this group<sup>20</sup>.

The presented indicators contribute to the thesis supporting the separation of the Church from the State, clearly represented by the Polish people. It is not a view which easily paved the way in the awareness of the Polish people, many of whom participated in or approved of the activity of the Church aiming at overthrowing the Communist authorities, regaining independence in a broad sense, based on democratic principles. For many years such a role of the Church, directly involved in politics, was regarded as desirable. The sociological examination of the contemporary reality in Poland indicates that the attitudes of the Polish people in this scope have undergone transformation from acceptance to lack of approval for the involvement of the Church in Poland in the political life. Among the Catholic clergy there are many priests who form similar views publicly (Father A. Boniecki, Father T. Pieronek).

The research presented in this study also included the issue of the involvement of the Church in Poland in public life, taking into account politics in the form of an extended 'cafeteria-style' question with four answers to choose from. The question concerned the opinions of respondents, namely: what do you think about the participation of the Church in public life and first of all, in politics? The question deliberately did not indicate a specific Church, its aim was to find out the subjective opinion of the respondents regarding the Church as an institution led by a certain group of people representing various viewpoints, achieving defined goals and performing different functions, including also social ones.

The first answer to choose from contains a statement that the Church should not have any connections with politics, the second admits that the Church should express opinions in certain public affairs, the third grants the Church every right in this matter, while the fourth one allows for not having an opinion.

The largest group of the surveyed young people is in favour of the first opinion (53.8%). In this group there are individuals declaring a various "intensity" of their religiousness, but deeply devout persons are represented by one respondent only. A smaller group claims that the Church can express opinions on certain public affairs (27.3%). The answers of the respondents being part of this group fall into a few categories:

– the first one is the sphere of morality, moral and ethical norms as well as moral upbringing and system of values. These statements include:

– *these [matters] touching upon a subject of morality, ethics* (K, 24 years old, a female student from Silesia);

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<sup>20</sup> www.ciekaweliczby.pl [18.09.2017], the research was conducted among 1051 persons above the age of 18 years old; in the research sample the quotas were selected according to the representation in the population depending on their sex, age and the size of the place of residence.

- *the protection of life* (K, 24 years old, a female student from Silesia);
- *abortion, euthanasia etc., homosexual relationships... since we live in a confessional state* (K, 25 years old, a female student, Silesia);
- *the issues relating to moral values, respect for human life, reverence for life* (K, 24 years old, a female student, Silesia).

The second group of statements including permission to discuss certain public affairs by the Church refers to politics, politicians and international matters to a greater or lesser extent:

- *e.g. in the case of conflicts (war) [the Church] should remind people about morality, which is of the utmost importance (and not someone's political interests)* (K, 24 years of age, a female student, Cieszyn Silesia);
- *to remind the authorities and people holding important positions which values they should be guided by* (M, 24 years of age, a male student, Dąbrowa Basin);
- *when a weaker citizen gets hurt* (K., 29 years of age, a working female, Żywiec County);
- *when politicians speak ill of God and believers* (K., 23 years old, a female student, Żywiec County).

The last category of statements concerning public affairs which the Church might discuss are the opinions on the Church itself:

- *in matters which destroy the image of the Church, Christ and people* (M., 1. 18, a male student, Żywiec County);
- *when politicians hurt believers with their words and make fun of them* (M., 29 years old, a working male, Żywiec County).

Twenty eight of the respondents (21.2%) claimed that the Church has the right to express its opinion on all public affairs, including political matters. Seventeen persons (12.9%) declined to answer and chose the category "it is difficult to say".

The presented results of the survey confirm the thesis that the Polish people, including the young generation, are increasingly convinced of the necessity for the Church to distance itself from politics – among the respondents the opinion that the Church should have no links with politics whatsoever predominates. However, some of the surveyed agree with the fact that in certain public affairs the Church should express its opinion. Although political threads were included in the justification of this viewpoint, the respondents grant the Church consent, first of all, in the scope of social and cultural functions as well as shaping the axionormative system.

Other studies reveal similar facts, along the aforementioned ones, for instance the one conducted a few years earlier by the already quoted Józef Baniak, who addressed a question to secondary school and university students as to their opinion on the real participation of the Catholic Church in political life, among other things. Are the Church authorities interfering in internal and foreign policy of Poland? Should the Church be strictly separated from the State? The results are not surprising: about 3/4 of the respondents claim that the participation of the Roman Catholic Church

and its authorities in the political life of the State and local environments “is too visible and overactive, often bordering with interference and usurpation, as well as disrespect for and challenging the competence of secular authorities”<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, the majority of respondents are in favour of separating the Church from the State<sup>22</sup>.

The researchers of religious phenomena evaluate attitudes of young people towards religion and the Church, their approach to practices, self-assessment of religiousness and similar issues, at the same time showing their nature and direction of change. Does the Church react to this knowledge and how does it do it? This question opens another pool of issues worthy of discussion and academic reflection, which go beyond theology and the Church. The grounds for such a debate appeared in October 2018, when the Synod on *Young people, the faith and vocational discernment* was held. Before the Synod the Vatican planned to conduct a survey, which was sent from the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops to all episcopal conferences, dioceses and Church institutions. According to its authors, the survey includes the specificity of individual countries and cultural differences between them. Obviously, sociologists are interested in the content of the survey. We need to wait for its full picture, but on the website of the Catholic Information Agency there is some information on surveys in Warsaw. They concerned the characteristics of young people from the Archdiocese of Warsaw, the plane of its possible and actual contact with the Church, their viewpoint on a good start in life (access to various technologies and knowledge, the possibility to travel around the world and meet peers), the assessment of Church initiatives as well as questions on what young people expect from the Church<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, interesting prospects are raised of a broad, even worldwide discussion on topics, which we have been taking care of in local dimensions for years and we seek answers to many questions on the same scale. Meanwhile, the opportunity occurs to transcend from local into global knowledge of young people and the Roman Catholic Church.

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<sup>21</sup> J. Baniak, *Religia katolicka i Kościół rzymskokatolicki w opiniach...*, op. cit., pp. 292-293.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 297.

<sup>23</sup> <https://ekai.pl/jaki-jest-mlody-kosciol-stolicy-ankieta-archidiecezji-warszawskiej-przed-synodem-o-mlodziezy/>.